Family Connection to DuBard School Leads to A Gift Worth More Than Words

For 50 years, the DuBard School for Language Disorders has brought hope to children with communication disorders and their families. As the DuBard School celebrates its golden anniversary, gifts from donors like Charlie and Cindy Sutherland of Hattiesburg, Miss., to the DuBard School for Language Disorders 50th Anniversary Campaign help prepare for a future where all children have the opportunity to learn and reach their full potential.

Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland know first-hand the difference the DuBard School can make in the life of a child. Their nine-year-old grandson, Charlie, is currently a student at the school and has made vast improvements in his communication skills.

"It is truly unbelievable what this program has done for Charlie," said Mrs. Sutherland. "He was really struggling and not having fun at school. Now he is learning and really enjoying school. What they do is simply amazing."

The mission of the DuBard School for Language Disorders at The University of Southern Mississippi is to bring the gift of oral and written language to individuals with severe communication disorders through the use of the DuBard Association Method in direct clinical services and professional training. More than 150 professionals from across the nation undergo training in the DuBard Association Method annually. The school also serves as a teaching and practicum site for dozens of University students studying speech-language pathology, audiology, deaf education, science education, human performance and recreation, music, social work and other academic areas.

While the DuBard School helps many children each year, others are not so fortunate. With nearly 150 individuals placed on the waiting list for full-time and outpatient services, the deferred period often approaches two years.

In 2009, Charlie began outpatient therapy after school while waiting to be enrolled in the full-time program. After two years of waiting, Charlie was finally enrolled as a full-time student at the DuBard School in 2011.

"With such limited space, there isn’t room for every child," said Mrs. Sutherland. "We were so grateful Charlie was able to enroll in the program. I honestly don’t know what we would have done if it weren’t for the DuBard School!"

The communication skills taught by the DuBard School are a vital link between the student’s family, friends and community. While the cost to provide full-time enrollment services is approximately $18,500 annually per student, the DuBard School provides these services free of charge to its students. Funding received from the Mississippi Department of Education covers only part of the total annual budget, leaving the DuBard School to rely heavily on the generosity of private benefactors and charitable organizations.

Funds generated from the DuBard School for Language Disorders 50th Anniversary Campaign will ensure that students like Charlie continue to receive critical language, speech and academic therapy, and that University students and professionals who are training in the areas of speech-language pathology, audiology, education of the deaf and specialized reading instruction have a place to learn and excel.

"It is the public and private partnerships which make the DuBard School’s services possible," said Dr. Maureen Martin, Director of the DuBard School. "The Sutherlands’ generosity will touch many lives for many years. Success in academics will be a tangible result of their gift along with preparation of University students for service elsewhere. We are indeed grateful."

Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland hope that others feel inspired as they did to support the DuBard School.

"It is in the overall scheme of things, our gift is a small part," said Mr. Sutherland. "But we believe in this program and want to see it continue to grow. This place is helping kids to one day become productive citizens in our area. We are fortunate to be able to play a part in that."

As of January 31, 2013, the DuBard School for Language Disorders 50th Anniversary Campaign has successfully raised approximately $750,000 in gifts and pledges. The Campaign, which was launched in March 2012, will run through December 2013.